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DPD-5064-59

23 July 1959

MEMORANDUM FOR: Acting Chief, DPD-DD/P

SUBJECT : Headquarters Critique of Operation TOUCHDOWN

1. A critique was held on 17 July to review the Headquarters planning and execution of Operation TOUCHDOWN. Although the operation involving CHAMION Mission 4125 was unquestionably a great success on the part of all concerned, there were a few items which the Staff felt would improve future operations and/or Headquarters planning. A list of these items with the recommended action to be taken by appropriate sections follows:

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a. The Administrative Branch pointed out a slight inconsistency in properly briefing their own staff duty officers regarding who to call on messages concerning code name operations such as TOUCHDOWN. [ ] took it on as an admin responsibility to inform staff duty officers (not necessarily of what the code name operation was) who (primarily in Operations) should be called on immediate action messages involving such code name operations.

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b. It was pointed out by a couple of members of the staff that the use of [ ] channels may deprive the staff of complete knowledge of what has been told to the detachment. This did not actually happen in this case but it was suspected and it was pointed out as a possibility. Col. Burke agreed to confine the use of [ ] channels to the transmission of highly sensitive matters involving policy or personal items which he and the Detachment Commanders felt should have restricted distribution both within the detachments and Headquarters.

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c. It was agreed that the rapid return of the take from Mission 4125 to the ZI, the film processing on a priority basis, and the initial read-out by the PIC on a rush basis was clearly justified and should be adopted as a standard on all actual penetrations. The main purpose for the fast return was to give the U. S. Government, and more specifically the Agency, maximum time to be prepared for a protest or for immediate display to senior Government officials. It should be noted that the fast return of the ELINT tapes and their equally fast read-out gave the Agency a very accurate indication of what to expect in the way of Soviet evidence of tracking. It, therefore, will be the

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policy that, on all Soviet overflights, special arrangements will be made in advance to return the film and MIINT tapes as rapidly as possible, to include the use of commercial airlines as necessary. The Operations Branch will include this in their procedures.

d. Although the security within Headquarters preceding and during the planning and execution of the mission was considered excellent, there seemed to be a tendency in the two or three days following the mission towards loose talk in the halls. There was no definite evidence or specific incident cited, but rather, the general opinion of those present. During and immediately following any future operations where this might again be a factor, the Security Section will make it a special subject to remind all knowledgeable people not to talk unnecessarily.

e. In order to provide EK with the lead time necessary for them to set up the proper developing solutions, it is necessary that they be given much of the information contained on the normal data sheet which is filled out by the detachment and accompanies the film. [ ] is developing a procedure which will insure that Eastman has the proper sun angle, haze conditions and other factors which EK needs to know in order to be prepared to give the fastest processing service.

f. Although we were aware of no support aircraft troubles during this operation, it was the consensus that every critical support aircraft should have a spare back-up. It was noted, for example, that had the C-130 which was in place at Adana to carry the group to [ ] failed to make its take-off at Adana due to maintenance difficulty, the whole operation would have slipped with the tight time schedule as applied to this operation. Had there been a delay anywhere it is considered probable that 4125 would never have gone, at least within the allotted five days. Therefore, as a policy, the need for a spare back-up for all support aircraft will be considered in every case.

g. There were two last-minute plans developed which should have been completed earlier. One involved the establishment of the cover flight and the other a contingency plan for withdrawal in the event weather deteriorated at go-no-go time. In all subsequent operations, including those not involving stagings, cover and contingency plans will be fully considered and developed as necessary.

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h. Prior to any future staging operations, a pre-mission or pre-operation planning meeting will be held. Although there is a daily operations briefing, it is felt that a pre-operations planning meeting, going into great detail, will be of major benefit and will tend to eliminate most, if not all, of the type things which were considered deficiencies during Operation TOUCHDOWN. These will be scheduled by the Operations Branch and all branches involved will be requested to attend.

SIGNED

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[Redacted Signature]

Lt. Colonel, USAF  
Deputy Chief, Operations Br.  
DPD-DD/P

DPD/OPS/CFQ:aem

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